

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAA-01 SES-02  
SSM-03 HA-05 /084 W  
-----123982 061634Z/11

O 061607Z SEP 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5332  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USMISSION SINAI  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 11887

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PEPR, SY, LE  
SUBJECT: SYRIAN INTENTIONS IN LEBANON

REF: A) DAMASCUS 5205, B) BEIRUT 5115, C) TEL AVIV 10377

1. WE ALL SEEM NOW TO AGREE THAT SYRIA WISHES TO BREAK  
THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY POWER OF THE MARONITE MILITIAS.  
THE UNANSWERED QUESTION IS WHAT ARE THE SYRIAN OBJECTIVES  
IN ATTEMPTING TO ACCOMPLISH THIS TASK.

2. WHATEVER THE ANSWER, ISRAELIS ARE CERTAINLY MORE SUS-  
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PICIOUS AND PERHAPS MORE CYNICAL THAN BOUTROS (REF. B).  
THEY RELATE CONTINUING EFFORTS TO "WEAKEN" THE PHALANGE  
AND NLP MILITIAS TO THE SYRIAN DESIRE TO OBTAIN LEBANESE  
"COORDINATION" IN FOREIGN AND MILITARY POLICY. THE VIEW  
THAT DAMASCUS SIMPLY AIMS TO BREAK THE MILITIAS SO THAT  
THE LEBANESE ARMY CAN REASSERT GOL AUTHORITY IS CONSIDERED  
NAIVE BY ISRAELIS. WHY, ISRAELIS ASK, WOULD SYRIA HAVE

SUCH A BENIGN OBJECTIVE WHEN ISRAEL, IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES, WOULD CERTAINLY DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO EXTEND ITS SPHERE OF INFLUENCE.

3. THE ISRAELIS ALSO NOTE THAT THE SYRIANS ALLOW FRANJIYAH TO RUN HIS FIEFDOM IN ZGHORTA WITHOUT HINDRANCE BECAUSE HE HAS ACQUIESCED IN DAMASCUS' LEBANESE POLICY. FURTHER, THE SYRIANS DO NOT INTRUDE INTO PALESTINIAN CAMPS OR MOST LEBANESE LEFTIST-CONTROLLED AREAS BECAUSE DAMASCUS SEES THEIR INTERESTS AS PARALLEL AT THE PRESENT TIME. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOI STRESSES THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE AND ARE CONTINUING TO TRY TO SUPPRESS THAT PART OF THE LEBANESE PEOPLE MOST OPPOSED TO LEBANON BECOMING A SYRIAN SPHERE OF INFLUENCE.

4. WE ALSO HEAR FROM THE GOI THE ARGUMENT THAT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MARONITE MILITIAS (THE PRESUMED SYRIAN APPROACH, SINCE THE MILITIAS ARE UNLIKELY TO ACQUIESCE IN THEIR OWN "WEAKENING") IS NOT THE BEST WAY TO PUT TOGETHER A "REAL STATE OF LEBANON." BEATING THE MILITIAS INTO SUBMISSION AND COWING THE SEGMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WHO SUPPORT THEM, AS OPPOSED TO THE MORE DIFFICULT APPROACH OF COMPROMISE AND RECONCILIATION, HARDLY SEEMS TO THE GOI A PRODUCTIVE PATH LIKELY TO LEAD TO NATIONAL RECONCILIATION.

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5. ISRAELIS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM DO NOT AGREE WITH AMBASSADOR SEELYE'S COMMENT THAT THE GOI'S LEBANESE POLICY IS SHORTSIGHTED. AS BOUTROS HIMSELF NOTED, THE GOI WOULD NOW GO A LONG WAY TO OBLIGING THE SYRIANS ON FOREIGN POLICY AND MILITARY MATTERS. THE ISRAELIS ARE SKEPTICAL THAT THE SYRIANS, HAVING GOTTEN THIS FAR, WILL SETTLE FOR LESS THAN DOMINATION. WHY SHOULD THEY? AND WITH RESPECT TO BOUTROS' IMPLIED SUGGESTION OF A REASERTION OF GOI SOVEREIGNTY BASED ON A RECONSTRUCTED ARMY AND POLITICAL CONSENSUS, THE ISRAELIS REGARD THAT AT THE MOMENT AS AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM, HARDLY SOMETHING TO BUILD A POLICY ON. THE ISRAELIS ALSO ARGUE THAT THE SYRIANS ARE UNLIKELY TO SUPPORT THE CREATION OF A REBUILT LAF THAT WILL HAVE THE ABILITY TO STAND UP TO SYRIAN INFLUENCE. WHY SHOULD THEY? AS FOR THE GOAL OF POLITICAL CONSENSUS, THE GOI ARGUES IT HAS NOT EXISTED IN LEBANON FOR YEARS, AND, IN ANY CASE, SYRIAN ACTIONS DO NOT SEEM DESIGNED TO BRING THE MARONITES ON BOARD.

6. THUS, THE ISRAELIS DISAGREE WITH AMB. SEELYE'S ASSESSMENT. THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE SLOGGED IT OUT IN THE LEBANESE MORASS SO THAT THEY CAN EVENTUALLY

WITHDRAW THEIR TROOPS, SEE THEIR INFLUENCE REDUCED AND FACE A GOL AND A REVITALIZED LEBANESE ARMY THAT CAN SUCCESSFULLY RESIST THE DETERMINANTS OF SYRIAN NATIONAL INTEREST, WHICH MUST BE TO HAVE A LEBANON SYMPATHETIC TO DAMASCUS' VIEW OF THE WORLD.

7. COMMENT: IT SEEMS TO US THAT A CLEAR DEFINITION OF ULTIMATE SYRIAN INTENTIONS IS BEYOND OUR GRASP. ALL OF US CAN ONLY GUESS. WHAT IS CERTAIN IS THAT SYRIA CONTINUES TO MOVE AGAINST THE MILITIAS AND THAT, IF CARRIED FAR ENOUGH, COULD TRIGGER DIRECT ISRAELI MILITARY INTERVENTION IN LEBANON. THE PROBLEM IS NOBODY KNOWS HOW FAR THE STICK HERE WILL BEND BEFORE IT BREAKS. BUT ONE CAN SAY THAT, IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, ISRAELI INTER-

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
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SES-02 SSM-03 HA-05 /095 W  
-----123994 061634Z /11

O 061607Z SEP 78

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5333

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 TEL AVIV 11887

VENTION IN LEBANON WOULD AT BEST DAMAGE THE PEACE PROCESS  
AND AT WORST IGNITE ANOTHER MIDDLE EAST WAR. SURELY  
THE DISTANT OBJECTIVE OF A LEBANESE PHOENIX RISEN FROM  
THE ASHES IS NOT WORTH THIS RISK. THAT, AMONG OTHER  
REASONS, IS WHY IN OUR JUDGMENT THE U.S. CANNOT AFFORD  
TO STAND BY WHILE SYRIA ATTEMPTS TO BRING THE MARONITE  
MILITIAS TO THEIR KNEES. VIETS

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